

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MAPUTO 00995 181730Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-07 OMB-01 CAB-02

CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 INR-07

NSAE-00 FAA-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 /100 W

-----085818 181751Z /44

R 170901Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6137

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

/AMEMBASSY LUSAKA 1787

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY LILONGWE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MAPUTO 0995

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MZ, EAIR

SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE ORDERS CLOSURE OF LOCAL AEROFLOT OFFICE

REF: MAPUTO 0881 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: MOZAMBIQUE AUTHORITIES HAVE ORDERED THE LOCAL AEROFLOT OFFICE TO CEASE OPERATIONS. THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION WAS TAKEN AFTER LOCAL AEROFLOT OFFICIALS WERE FOUND TO BE ENGAGED IN ILLEGAL CURRENCY TRANSACTIONS IN THE SALE OF AEROFLOT TICKETS. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALLOWED WEEKLY AEROFLOT FLIGHTS FROM MAPUTO TO MOSCOW TO CONTINUE, AEROFLOT TICKETS WILL NOW BE SOLD ONLY THROUGH MOZAMBIQUE'S NATIONAL TOURIST AGENCY. END SUMMARY.

2. BACKGROUND: IN MID-JULY THE GOVERNMENT OF MOZAMBIQUE
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PAGE 02 MAPUTO 00995 181730Z

CLOSED MAPUTO AIRPORT FOR TWO DAYS, INVALIDATED ALL DETA (MOZAMBIQUE AIRWAYS) TICKETS AND ESTABLISHED A NATIONAL TRAVEL AGENCY TO SELL ALL INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT TICKETS. THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS WERE TAKEN FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY THAT THOUSANDS OF DETA TICKETS HAD BEEN COUNTERFEITED AND THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF DEPARTING PORTUGUESE HAD BEEN TURNING IN THEIR TICKETS FOR FOREIGN CURRENCY AFTER

THEIR DEPARTURE.

3. AEROFLOT INVOLVEMENT: DURING THE COURSE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INVESTIGATIONS OF THE DETA TICKET FORGERIES, MOZAMBIQUE AUTHORITIES DISCOVERED THAT AEROFLOT WAS ALSO INVOLVED IN QUESTIONABLE TRANSACTIONS. ACCORDING TO PORTUGUESE EMBASSY OFFICERS AND LOW-LEVEL MOZAMBIKAN OFFICIALS, THE AEROFLOT OFFICE IN MAPUTO WAS SELLING TICKETS FROM MAPUTO TO MOSCOW TO LISBON FOR HALF THE IATA RATE, THE EQUIVALENT IN ESCUDOS OF US\$670. HOWEVER, ON THE FACE OF THE TICKETS, AEROFLOT WAS INDICATING THE FULL RATE, APPROXIMATELY US\$1,585. THEN, UNDER A PROVISIONAL AIR AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN MAPUTO AND MOSCOW, AEROFLOT OFFICIALS WERE REQUESTING THE MOZAMBIQUE GOVERNMENT TO CONVERT INTO HARD CURRENCY APPROXIMATELY 75 PERCENT OF THE FACE VALUE OF THE TICKET (NOT THE SALE PRICE) INTO HARD CURRENCY. (ONE SOURCE INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT SINCE AEROFLOT BEGAN OPERATIONS IN MAPUTO, IT HAD DEFRAUDED THE GOVERNMENT OF APPROXIMATELY US\$3 MILLION IN HARD CURRENCY.) AFTER COMPLETING ITS INVESTIGATIONS, THE MOZAMBIQUE GOVERNMENT QUIETLY ORDERED AEROFLOT TO CLOSE ITS MAPUTO OFFICE AND TO GIVE MOZAMBIQUE'S NEWLY ESTABLISHED TOURIST ORGANIZATION THE AUTHORITY TO SELL ITS TICKETS.

4. NO OTHER FOREIGN CARRIERS WITH OFFICES IN MAPUTO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS. AIR TANZANIA, AIR ZAMBIA, TAP AND SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS ARE CONTINUING
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PAGE 03 MAPUTO 00995 181730Z

TO SELL THEIR RESPECTIVE INTERNATIONAL TICKETS.

5. COMMENT: WHILE A NUMBER OF MOZAMBIKANS HAVE MUMBLED ABOUT HOW THE RUSSIANS ARE CHARGING THE GOVERNMENT HARD CURRENCY FOR THE SERVICES OF THEIR TECHNICAL PERSONNEL, THIS IS THE FIRST PROVEN CASE OF MOZAMBIKAN UNHAPPINESS WITH THE WAY THE RUSSIANS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTING THEMSELVES. DESPITE THE GOVERNMENT'S DISPLEASURE WITH AEROFLOT, THIS INCIDENT IS NOT LIKELY TO ALTER MOZAMBIQUE'S PRO-MOSCOW STANCE. IT IS ALSO WORTH NOTING THAT MOZAMBIQUE'S PRO-COMMUNIST PRESS HAS STUDIOUSLY AVOIDED ANY MENTION OF AEROFLOT'S TRANSGRESSIONS.
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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 17-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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